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RELATING VACATION TRAVEL BY CANADIANS

TO THEIR ATTITUDE TO CANADIAN

AND U.S. VACATION DESTINATIONS

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Relating Vacation Travel By Canadians
To Their Attitudes to Canadian and U.S.
Vacation Destinations

An annual survey of the vacation trip patterns of Canadians is carried out by the Canadian Government Office of Tourism using a national syndicated survey. The 1973 survey had an additional section, a battery of attitude questions on vacation travel to the United States as compared to other provinces in Canada. This paper will discuss the reasons for incorporating this new battery of attitude questions into this annual survey, the selection of the attitude statements and whether the results warranted the additional costs of the research.

The first survey of vacation patterns of Canadians was commissioned just before Expo '67. A second survey followed in November 1967 so that 1966 and 1967 could be compared. The Canadian Government Office of Tourism then decided to maintain this survey on an annual basis. This survey has evolved into a time series which is now in its ninth year. Questions on vacation trips taken, where, when, for how long, purpose and similar are purchased on a syndicated survey based on a national probability sample of Canadians. About six thousand adult respondents are interviewed of the eight thousand in the sample (hence the term "8M" used by Canadian Facts Limited, the marketing research house). The travel questions are co-ordinated by Traveldata Limited who have included among co-sponsors in the travel industry provincial governments, other federal departments, magazines as Time and Reader's Digest, chartered banks concerned with the retail travel trade as well as the United States Travel Service. These bodies buy tie-in questions on travel and some do so on an annual basis.

In 1969 it was decided that the Canadian Government Office of Tourism should actively promote travel within Canada by Canadians. This was a major decision which added substantially to our active programs. Our emphasis has been in the United States with increasing attention to overseas markets in Europe, Japan and Australia. To help us initiate the planning for our marketing strategies we conducted a series of group motivation research discussions across Canada among persons who had taken vacation trips in the United States recently. We wished to learn their attitudes to taking vacation trips in Canada as compared to the U.S.A. A number of positive appeals of Canadian vacation destinations and some negatives emerged from these discussions. This included lack of knowledge of what there was to see and do elsewhere in Canada, apprehension of regional hostilities, the feeling that it was easier to relax outside the country, better weather and better beaches in the States and so forth. Our in-Canada program addressed itself to these apprehensions, and to reduce the ignorance of Canada's vacation appeals among our own residents. This program soon involved an investment in excess of a million dollars a year. To this must be added a co-ordinated effort



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by provincial governments and the private sector. My management wanted to know, of course, if this investment was having any success. By 1972 the annual vacation patterns survey showed an increase of travel in Canada and a decrease of vacation trips taken within the United States. The question emerged, have the attitudes to vacation travel in Canada also been changed as the result of this large scale investment? It was important to learn whether attitudes to vacations in Canada were shifting. By measuring the direction of attitudes changes our advertising strategy for the in-Canada program could be modified from year to year. The question arose on how shifts in attitudes could be detected and measured.

To conduct another set of group discussions across the country might tell us something about current attitudes but would not have the quantitative measure needed on attitude shifts. The decision to add a battery of attitude questions to relate to questions on actual vacation trips taken would allow us to measure these changes by region of origin in Canada on whether the respondent travelled in the U.S. or within Canada on vacation trips and the usual age, sex, language, socio-economic and community size breaks. We wished to develop a predictive instrument of attitude shifts. This would be done by deciding on a limited number of attitudes towards vacation travel which would represent the total complex of attitudes affecting a decision on whether to vacation in the United States or within Canada.

A list of almost a hundred attitudinal statements was developed by a research team. This consisted of Frank Costanzo of the Centre de Recherche Contemporaine, Paul Crocker and Lorraine Roy. They developed a list by a search through past studies conducted by the CGOT and from other travel studies available to the team. The research task was to reduce this list to less than twenty items. There was considerable discussion on whether the same scale could be used for English and French speaking Canadians considering the different cultural and life-style patterns, quite aside from the nuances of meaning of each question between the two languages.

A pilot survey of respondents selected by on a random sampling basis was carried out among 107 Anglophones living outside the province of Quebec and 67 Francophones living in Quebec - each sub-sample was evenly divided between men and women. All were 18 years of age and over and had taken a vacation trip out of their home province in the past three years. Each was asked, on a seven point scale ranging from whether they agreed completely to disagreed completely to each of 97 statements. For 68 of the questions - respondents were asked to rate Canada, in comparison to the U.S. For example "compared to vacationing in the U.S., vacationing in other Canadian provinces -

would expose me to cleaner cities"
would be risky in terms of weather"
would expose me to friendlier people"
would permit me to do whatever I wish"

and for the remainder on to where on a seven point scale they would agree to statements as:

"I've seen enough of my own country for a while, so now I prefer vacationing in the U.S."

"The U.S. still has better beaches than Canada does".

The answers were subjected to factor analysis which sorted the attitudes into 16 factors. Those statements which had the highest loading were selected to represent the item statements. There were two statements which were pre-selected to use as a check on to relate with attitudes. These were:

Compared to vacationing in the U.S. vacationing in other Canadian provinces:

"would be more appealing"

"would be preferable, all things considered".

These two items served as criteria in order to proceed to the next stage of the study. This was to find out how good our item statements were in predicting people's likelihood of being favourable to vacation travel in other Canadian provinces as opposed to vacationing in the U.S.

A step wise regression analysis was then done for each of the two criterion variables to find out which of the items best correlated with each of the criterion variable. Twenty statements were listed. A separate factor analysis for the French questions was done on one variable. An additional two distinct statements emerged. The list from the factor analysis was matched against the one obtained from the regression analysis. Fourteen statements were finally selected including the two which emerged from the French language sample.

By using two multivariate techniques we were in a better position to select items not only representative of current attitudes but those that could be predictive of future vacation destination choices. The final battery of questions is noted in the appendix.

The 1973 Vacation Patterns study found that 56% of Canadians took a vacation trip in 1973. An average of 1.56 trips was taken per vacation trip taker, i.e. 19% of Canadians took two, three or more vacation trips during 1973, a decrease from 1972. The United States was visited for one night or longer for 22% of total vacation trips while 32% included one night or more in "another" province. When asked about the past three years, 73%

reported taking one or more vacation trips. The U.S. was visited by 36% and "other" provinces by 41%.

The statement "A vacation in other provinces would be preferable to one in the U.S., all things considered" was agreed to by 69% of Canadians. It is not surprising that a lower proportion of those who have taken a vacation trip in the U.S. in past three years agree with this statement, 66% while more of those who haven't headed to the U.S. agree - 72%. The margin is widest for residents of Quebec. A sharper measure of Canadian attitudes to this statement is the 12% who disagree among those who had vacationed in the U.S. in the past three years as compared to the 6% who hadn't.

The statement "vacationing in the U.S. is almost like not being out of the country" more sharply delineated the two groups. The percentage of agreement with this statement is 25% for those who had not vacationed in the U.S. during the past three years and 41% for those who have. The margin is widest for residents of British Columbia and Ontario. The statement "when I choose a vacation spot I think of the place itself and don't especially consider whether it's in Canada or the U.S." has a 64% level of agreement. Fully 71% who vacationed in the U.S. during the past three years agree as opposed to 57% who have not. The Prairies show virtually no difference (64% vs. 65%) while it is a very evident 20% spread (71% vs. 51%) for Ontario residents who have and have not taken vacation trips in the U.S. in this three year period. Beaches are a positive asset to the U.S. "The U.S. still has better beaches than Canada does" is agreed to by 38% who have taken vacation trips in that country in contrast to 12% who have not. The spread is even wider on the statement about better weather in the U.S. for vacations. On the other hand there is virtually no difference on agreement levels for statements such as "It's unfortunate but Canada is just not different enough to interest me for a vacation" and "A vacation in other provinces would offer recreational facilities inferior to those in the U.S." However more French speaking Quebecers who have visited other provinces on vacation trips are more likely to agree with this statement (20%) than the average Canadian (6%), though the Francophone Canadians who have visited the U.S. on vacation have virtually the same views on this statement as other Canadians.

The attitude statements are cross tabulated with a range of socio-economic data on vacationers and vacation trip characteristics. The predictive aspect of the battery is still under development and has not yet reached the point where it can provide a good measure of future behaviour of travel to Canada as opposed to the U.S. This is a multi-stage procedure which will require a further year's data in order to finalize a good predictive measure. By this procedure we can eliminate those statements which hardly discriminate and add new statements which will increase the predictive value of the battery. Further insights will be gained when the findings of the 1974 study are available in the Spring of 1975.

Special thanks are due to Ms. Lorraine Roy, Cockfield Brown, Montreal for her contribution to this paper with further acknowledgements to Douglas Ball, Cecile Sabourin, David Thexton and Walter Garrett.

Your comments and questions would be welcome.

I am going to read a list of statements about vacationing in other provinces of Canada compared to vacationing in the U. S. Please call off the number on this card which best describes how much you agree or disagree with each statement. HAND RESPONDENT CARD. You may base your answers either on your personal experiences or just your general impressions.

Now, for each statement you will be rating other Canadian provinces in comparison to the U. S.

ROTATE ORDER OF READING. CHECK STARTING POINT.
BE SURE TO READ ALL STATEMENTS.

- ☐ A vacation in other provinces would provide better entertainment for the whole family than one in the U. S.
- ☐ A vacation in other provinces would involve having to travel greater distances between points of interest than one in the U. S.
- ☐ A vacation in other provinces would enable me to feel more free to do and act as I please than one in the U. S.
- ☐ A vacation in other provinces would offer recreational facilities inferior to those in the U. S.
- ☐ A vacation in other provinces would be more educational than one in the U. S.
- ☐ A vacation in other provinces would be preferable to one in the U. S., all things considered.

And to finish up, and always thinking about other Canadian provinces, how completely do you yourself agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

ROTATE ORDER OF READING. CHECK STARTING POINT.
BE SURE TO READ ALL STATEMENTS.

- ☐ It's unfortunate, but Canada is just not different enough to interest me for a vacation.
- ☐ Vacationing in the U. S. is almost like not being out of the country.
- ☐ They just haven't made the Canadian wilderness interesting enough for people like me.

- ☐ To my mind, Canada is getting to be a better vacation spot than is the U. S.
- ☐ Your friends are always more interested in hearing about a vacation in the U. S. than hearing about a vacation in Canada.
- ☐ Tho U. S. still has better beaches than Canada does.
- ☐ Tho weather in the U. S. is usually better for vacations than it is in Canada.
- ☐ When I choose a vacation spot, I think of the place itself and don't especially consider whether it's in Canada or the U. S.

